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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0392

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 001336

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/18/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [GR](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: APPROACHING GREECE ON REBUTTING RUSSIAN GENOCIDE
CLAIMS AGAINST GEORGIA

REF: A. SECSTATE 98030
[1](#)B. ATHENS 1288

Classified By: DCM DEBORAH MCCARTHY. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) DCM discussed ref A points on rebutting Russia's claims against Georgia with the Prime Minister's diplomatic advisor Constantinos Bitsios. She noted the speciousness of the Russian claims of genocide, the lack of supporting evidence from international NGOs, and our request for Greece to urge the EU to make a strong statement and to make its own statement. Bitsios was receptive to her arguments on the groundlessness of the Russian charges, but was noncommittal on Greece's taking action. He argued that it was more important to focus on the EU's and U.S.'s long-term relationship with Russia.

[1](#)2. (C) DepPolCouns also raised the issue with Elisabeth Fotiadou, deputy head of the MFA A5 Directorate for CIS Affairs. Fotiadou likewise agreed the Russian claims had little basis in fact, but she advised against taking them too seriously. "Both sides" were likely to make "radical" charges, she argued. DepPolCouns replied that this was not a he-said-she-said situation. The Russians were making irresponsible and wild claims and it was important for the international community, including Greece, to demonstrate to Russia that we do not accept such justifications or rationales for Russia's illegal actions. Fotiadou conceded that international community solidarity was important and on this score noted that only Nicaragua had followed the Russian lead in recognizing the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. She said Greece supported the German proposal at the EU to investigate what had happened in Georgia and that Greece would await the findings of the investigation before taking a public stand. (Note: Greece has pledged eight military personnel and two Humvees to the newly announced EU observer mission in Georgia, in addition to one Greek already among the eight OSCE observers there. Also, as reported ref B, Greece has pledged or delivered well over 469,500 Euros of in-kind and financial humanitarian assistance to Georgia since the crisis began in August. End Note.)
SPECKHARD